

THE PHILOSOPHY AND PROPRIETY OF ABUNDANT PRAISE

NO. 1468

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, APRIL 13, 1879,
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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*"They shall abundantly utter the memory of Your great goodness,
and shall sing of Your righteousness."
Psalm 145:7.*

THIS is called "David's Psalm of Praise" and you will see that all through it he is inflamed by a strong desire that God may be greatly magnified. Hence he uses a variety of expressions and repeats himself in his holy vehemence. Run your eyes down the psalm and notice such words as these—"I will extol You." "I will bless Your name." "Every day will I bless You." "I will praise Your name forever and ever." "Great is the Lord and greatly to be praised." "One generation shall praise Your works to another." "I will speak of the glorious honor of Your majesty." "Men shall speak of the might of Your terrible acts" and other words of the same meaning down to the last verse—"My mouth shall speak the praise of the Lord: and let all flesh bless His holy name forever and ever." David is not content with declaring that Jehovah is worthy of praise or with pleading that His praise ought to be felt in the heart, but he will have it publicly spoken of, openly declared, plainly uttered, and joyfully proclaimed in song. The inspired Psalmist, moved by the Holy Spirit, calls upon all flesh, yes, and upon all the works of God to sound forth the praises of the Most High. Will we not heartily respond to the call?

In following out his design of praise, David had spoken in verse five of the majesty of God, the glorious King. His eye seems to be dazzled by the glorious splendor of the august throne and he cries, "I will speak of the glorious honor of Your majesty." Then he thinks of the power of that throne of majesty and of the force with which its just decrees are carried out and so in verse six he exclaims, "Men shall speak of the might of Your terrible acts and I will declare Your greatness." Here he speaks briefly both as to the majesty and the might of the dread Supreme, but when he turns his thoughts to the divine goodness, he enlarges and uses words which indicate the stress which he lays upon his subject and his desire to linger over it. "They shall abundantly utter," says our text, "the memory of Your great goodness." Now, our desire this morning is that we also may praise and magnify the name of the infinite Jehovah without limit and may especially have our hearts enlarged and our mouths opened wide to speak abundantly of His great goodness. O that in the whole of this congregation the text may become true—"They shall abundantly utter the memory of Your great goodness"—and having uttered it in plain speech, may we all rise a stage higher and with gladsome music sing of His righteousness.

You see our objective, an objective in which, I trust, you all sympathize. Come one and all and praise the Lord. Is the invitation too wide? Observe the ninth verse—"The Lord is good to all: and His tender mercies are over all His works. All Your works shall praise You." I will not limit the invitation of the Lord since you all drink of the river of His bounty. Render to Him, all of you, such praises as you can.

But there is a special invitation to His saints. Come and bless His name with spiritual, inward, enlightened praise. "Bless the Lord, O house of Israel. You that fear the Lord, bless the Lord." In your heart of hearts, extol, adore, and make Him great, for it is written—"Your saints shall bless You." Verily this shall not be written in vain, for our souls shall bless the Lord this day as the Holy Spirit shall move within us.

We shall speak upon two things that we may promote the objective we have in view. The first is *the method of securing the abundant utterance of God's praise as to His goodness*; and secondly, *the motives for desiring to secure this abundant utterance*.

I. THE METHOD OF SECURING THE ABUNDANT UTTERANCE OF THE DIVINE PRAISE CONCERNING HIS GOODNESS. Our text gives us the mental philosophy of abounding praise and shows us the plan by which such praise may be secured. The steps are such as the best mental philoso-

phy approves. First, we shall be helped to abundant praise by careful observation. Notice the text—“They shall abundantly utter the memory of Your great goodness.” Now, in order to memory, there must first of all be observation. A man does not remember what he never knew. This is clear to all and therefore the point is virtually implied in the text. In proportion as a fact or a truth makes an impression upon the mind, in that proportion is it likely to abide in the memory. If you hear a sermon, that which you remember afterwards is the point which most forcibly strikes you while you are listening to the discourse. At the time you say, “I will jot that down, for I should not like to forget it, for it comes so closely home to me”; and whether you use your pencil or not, memory obeys your wish and makes a record upon her tablets. It is so with the dealings of God towards us. If we want to remember His goodness, we must let it strike us—we must notice it, consider it, meditate upon it, estimate it, and allow it to exert its due influence upon our hearts—then we shall not need to say that “we must try and remember,” for we shall remember as a matter of course. The impression being clearly and deeply made will not easily fade away, but we shall see it after many days. The first thing, therefore, towards the plentiful praising of God is a careful observation of His goodness.

Now, see what it is that we are to observe—it is God’s goodness. Too many are blind to that blessed object. They receive the bounties of His liberality and are guided by His care, but they attribute all that they receive to themselves or to secondary agents. God is not in all their thoughts and consequently His goodness is not considered. They have no memory of His goodness because they have no observation of it. Some, indeed, instead of observing the goodness of God, complain of His unkindness to them and imagine that He is needlessly severe. Like the unprofitable servant in the parable, they say, “I knew You, that You are an austere man.” Others sit in judgment upon His ways, as we find them recorded in Holy Scripture and dare to condemn the Judge of all the earth. Denying the goodness of Jehovah, they attempt to set up another god than the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob who for this enlightened 19th Century is a God much too sternly just. In this house, however, we worship *Jah*, Jehovah the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—the God and Father of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ—and none other than He. In many a place of worship this day, they adore new gods, newly come up which our fathers knew not—not like the God of the Old Testament, who in the opinion of modern philosophers, is as much out of date as Jupiter himself. This day we say with David, “This God is our God forever and ever.” “O come let us worship and bow down; let us kneel before Jehovah our Maker. For He is our God and we are the people of His pasture and the sheep of His hand.” As we find the Lord revealed both in the Old and the New Testament, making no division in the revelation, but regarding it as one grand whole, we behold abundant goodness in Him. Mingled with that awful justice which we would not wish to deny, we see surpassing grace and we delight that God is love. He is gracious and full of compassion. He is slow to anger and of great mercy. We have no complaints to make against Him. We wish to make no alteration in His dealings or in His character. He is our exceeding joy—our whole heart rejoices in the contemplation of Him. “Who is like unto You, O God? Among the gods who is like unto You?” We are, then, to consider what many will not so much as believe—that there is great goodness in Jehovah, the God of creation, providence, and redemption—the God of Paradise, of Sinai, and of Calvary. We are to thoroughly acquaint ourselves with Him as He has made Himself known and we are continually to consider His great goodness, that we may retain the memory of it.

If we are willing to see, we shall not lack for opportunities of beholding His goodness every day, for it is to be seen in so many acts that I will not commence the catalog since I should never complete it. His goodness is seen in creation—it shines in every sunbeam, glitters in every dewdrop, smiles in every flower, and whispers in every breeze. Earth and sea and air, teeming with innumerable forms of life, are all full of the goodness of the Lord. Sun, moon, and stars affirm that the Lord is good and all terrestrial things echo the proclamation. His goodness is also to be seen in the providence which rules over all. Let rebellious spirits murmur as they may, goodness is enthroned in Jehovah’s kingdom and evil and suffering are intruders. God is good towards all His creatures and especially towards the objects of His eternal love for whom all things work together for good. It is, however, in the domain of divine grace that the noblest form of divine goodness is seen. Begin with the goodness which shines in our election and follow the silver thread through redemption, the mission of the Holy Spirit, the calling, the adoption, the preservation, the perfecting of the chosen—and you will see riches of goodness which will astound you! Dwell where you may within the kingdom of redemption, and you will see rivers, yes, oceans of good-

ness. I leave your own minds to remember these things and your own lips to abundantly utter the memory of the Lord's great goodness in the wonders of His salvation. It is not my design to speak for you, but to stir you up to speak for yourselves.

The point which struck the psalmist and should strike us all is *the greatness* of the goodness. The greatness of the goodness will be seen by the contemplative mind upon a consideration of *the person upon whom the goodness lights*. "Why me?" will often be the utterance of a grateful spirit. That God should be good to any of His people shows His mercy, but that He should make me to be one of His and deal so well with me—here His goodness exceeds itself. Why me? Is this the manner of man, O Lord? What am I and what is my father's house? It is great goodness because it visits persons so insignificant, yes more—so guilty and so deserving of wrath. Blessed be God that He is good to persons so ungrateful—to persons who cannot, even at the best, make any adequate return—who, alas, do not even make such return as they could. Ah, Lord, when I consider what a brutish creature I am, it is easy to confess the greatness of Your goodness.

The greatness of the goodness becomes apparent when we think of *the greatness of God the benefactor*. "What is man that You are mindful of him or the son of man that You visit him?" That God Himself should bless His people. That He should come in the form of human flesh to save His people. That He should dwell in us, walk in us, and be to us a God—a very present help in trouble—is a miracle of love. Is not this great goodness? I can very well understand that the infinity of His benevolence should commit us to the charge of angels, but it is amazing that it should be written, "I the Lord do keep it: I will water it every moment lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day." Oh, the greatness of such personal condescension, such personal care. O heir of heaven, from the fountain of all goodness shall you drink and not only from its streams. God Himself is your portion and the lot of your inheritance. You are not put off with creatures—the Creator Himself is yours. Will you not remember this and so keep alive the memory of His goodness?

The greatness of the goodness is, on some occasions, made manifest by the *evil from which it rescues us*. Nobody knows so well the blessing of health as he who has but lately been tortured in every limb—then for his restoration he blesses Jehovah Rophi, the healing Lord. None know what salvation from sin means like those who have been crushed beneath the burden of guilt and have been racked by remorse. Did you ever feel yourself condemned of God and cast out from His presence? Did the pangs of hell commence within your startled conscience? Did your soul long for death rather than life, while thick clouds and darkness shrouded your guilty spirit? If so, when the Lord has put away your sin and said, "You shall not die," when He has brought you forth from the prison, broken your bonds asunder and set your feet upon a rock, then has the new song been in your mouth, even praise forevermore. Then have you known it to be great goodness which thus delivered you. We may imagine what the bottom of the sea is like and conceive what it must be to be borne down to the lower deeps where the weeds are wrapped about the dead men's brows, yet I guarantee you that our imagination but poorly realizes what Jonah experienced when the floods compassed him about and he went down to the bottom of the mountains. When the Lord brought his life up from corruption, then he had a strong and vivid memory of the great goodness of God, seeing he had been delivered from so great a death. It is in the storm that we learn. O praise the Lord for His goodness and for His wonderful works to the children of men. If I might have it so, I could wish my whole life to be calm as a fair summer's evening when scarcely a zephyr stirs the happy flowers. I could desire that nothing might again disturb the serenity of my restful spirit—but were it to be so, I suspect I should know but little of the great goodness of the Lord. The sweet singer in the 107th Psalm ascribes the song of gratitude not to dwellers at home, but to wanderers in the wilderness—not to those who are always at liberty, but to emancipated captives—not to the strong and vigorous, but to those who barely escape from the gates of death. Not to those who stand upon a sea of glass, but to those who are tossed in tempests upon a raging ocean. Doubtless so it is—we should not perceive the greatness of goodness if we did not see the depth of the horrible pit from which it snatches us. You were almost ruined in business, friend, but you escaped with the skin of your teeth—then you praised God for His great goodness. Your dear child was given up by the physicians; your wife apparently sickened for death—but both these have been spared to you and herein you see the heights and depths of mercy. Now, therefore, lay up this great goodness in your memory to be the material for future psalms of praise.

Nor is this the only way of estimating God's great goodness—you may estimate it by *the actual greatness of the benefits bestowed*. He gives like a king. No, He gives like a God. Behold, your God has not given you a few minted coins of gold, but he has endowed you with the mines themselves. He has not, as it were, handed you a cup of cold water, but He has brought you to the flowing fountain and made the well itself your own. God Himself is ours. "The Lord is my portion, says my soul." If you must have a little list of what He has given you, ponder the following items—He has given you a name and a place among His people. He has given you the rights and the nature of His children. He has given you the complete forgiveness of all your sins and you have it now. He has given you a robe of righteousness and you are wearing it now. He has given you a superlative loveliness in Christ Jesus and you have it now. He has given you access to Him and prevalence at the Mercy Seat. He has given you this world and worlds to come. He has given you all that He has. He has given you His own Son, and how shall He now refuse you anything? Oh, He has given like a God. The greatness of His goodness this tongue can never hope to tell and so I ask you to think it over in a quiet hour at home. As for myself, I will speak of my Lord as I find Him, for the old proverb bids we do so. Whatever you shall say, brethren, I have nothing to speak but what is good of my God, my King, from my childhood until now. He amazes me with His mercy. He utterly astounds me with His loving-kindness. He causes my spirit to almost swoon away with delight beneath the sweetness of His love. Yet He has not spared me the rod, nor will He and blessed be His name for that also. "Shall we receive good at the hand of the Lord and shall we not also receive evil?" said the patriarch, but we will go beyond that and assert that evil is no evil when it comes from His hand. Everything is good which He ordains. We may not see it to be so at the time, but so it is. Our heavenly Father seems to rise from good to better and from better to yet better still in infinite progression. He causes the roadway of our life to rise higher and higher and carries it over lofty mountains of loving-kindness. Our life path winds ever upward to yet higher summits of abounding mercy—therefore let His praise increase and the name of the Lord be greater and greater still.

I want to urge you, dear friends, to observe the goodness of God carefully for your souls' good. There is a great difference between eyes and no eyes—yet many have eyes and see not. God's goodness flows before them and they say, "Where is it?" They breathe it and they say, "Where is it?" They sit at the table and they are fed upon it. They wear it upon their limbs. It is in the very beating of their heart and yet they say, "Where is it?" Be not blind. "The ox knows his owner and the ass his master's crib"—let us not be cruder than beasts of the field—but let us know the Lord and consider well the greatness of His goodness.

I have said that the text contains the philosophy of great praise and we see this in the second stage of the process, namely, diligent memory. That which has made an impression upon the mind by observation is fastened upon the memory. Memory seems to be in two things—first in retaining an impression and then in recollecting it at a future time. I suppose that, more or less, everything that happens to us is retained in the mind, but it is not easy to reproduce the fainter impressions when you wish to do so. I know in my own mind a great many things that I am sure I remember, but yet I cannot always recollect them immediately. Give me a quarter of an hour to run through a certain arrangement of ideas and I shall say, "Oh yes, I have it. It was in my mind, but I could not recall it at the time." Memory collects facts and afterwards recollects them. The matters before us are recorded by memory, but the tablet may be mislaid—the perfection of memory is to preserve the tablet in a well-known place from which you can fetch it forth in a moment. I have dwelt rather long upon observation with the view that you may begin aright from the beginning and by getting vivid impressions, may be the better able to retain and recall them. We cannot utter what we have forgotten and therefore the use of close observation to make a strong memory touching the Lord's great goodness.

How are we to strengthen our memory as to God's goodness? First, we should be well acquainted with the documents in which His goodness is recorded. A man may be said to keep in memory a fact which did not happen in his own time, but hundreds of years before he was born—he remembers it because he has seen the document in which the fact is recorded. In a certain sense this is within the range of memory—it is within the memory of man, the united memory of the race. Beloved, be familiar with the Word of God. Store your memory with the ancient records of His great goodness. Drink in the whole narrative of the evangelists and despise not Moses and the prophets. Soak in the Psalms and the Song of Solomon and such books till you come to know the well-recorded goodness of the Lord. Have His words

and deeds of goodness arranged and at your fingertips because they are in your heart and then you will be abundantly sure to utter the memory of His goodness, for “out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks.”

Next, if you would strengthen your memory, diligently observe the memorials. There are two in the Christian church. There is the memorial of your Savior’s death, burial, and resurrection which is set forth in believers’ baptism, wherein we are buried and risen with the Lord Christ. Forget not that memorial of His deep anguish when He was immersed in grief and plunged in agony, for He bids you observe it. And as for the Holy Supper, never neglect it, but be often at the table where again you set forth His death till He comes. He has bid you do this in remembrance of Him—devoutly cherish the precious memorial. Great events in nations have been preserved upon the memory of future generations by some ordained ceremonial and the Lord’s Supper is of that kind. Therefore, observe well the table of the Lord that you forget not His great goodness. Look how the Jews kept their Exodus in mind by means of the Paschal Lamb—how they ate it after the sprinkling of the blood—how they talked to their children and told them of the deliverance from Egypt, abundantly uttering the memory of God’s goodness and then after supper they sang a hymn, even as our text bids us sing of the righteousness of God. Strengthen your memories then by reverent attention to the historical documents and the memorial ordinances.

Still, the most important is the memory of what has happened to yourself, your own *personal experience*. I will not give a penny for your religion unless it has taken effect upon yourself. The power of prayer! What of that? Did you ever receive an answer to prayer? Did you ever wrestle with the angel and come away victorious? What do you know about prayer if you never prayed? You are very orthodox. Yes, but unless the doctrines of grace have brought to your soul the grace of the doctrines—and you have tasted and handled them—what do you know about them? Nothing certainly to remember. O, dear heart, were you ever born-again? Then you will remember His great goodness. Were you ever cleansed from your sin and justified in Christ? You will remember His great goodness. Have you been renewed in heart so as to hate sin and live in holiness? If so, you will remember because you know something which flesh and blood have not revealed unto you. Let every personal mercy be written upon your personal memory.

I have heard that the science of mnemonics, or the strengthening of the memory, for which I have not a very high esteem, lies in the following of certain methods. According to some, you link one idea with another—you remember a date by associating it with something that you can see. Practice this method in the present case. Remember God’s goodness by the objects around you which are associated with it. For instance, let your bed remind you of God’s mercy in the night watches and your table of His goodness in supplying your daily needs. My garments, when I put them on this morning, reminded me of times when my hand was unequal even to that simple task. All around us there are memoranda of God’s love if we choose to read them. The memory of some deed of divine goodness may be connected with every piece of furniture in your room. There is the old armchair where you wrestled with God in great trouble and received a gracious answer. You cannot forget it—you do not pray so well anywhere else as you do there—you have become attached to that particular chair. That thumbed Bible, that particular one I mean—it is getting rather worn now and is marked a good deal, but nevertheless, out of that very copy the promises have gleamed forth like the stars in heaven and therefore it helps your memory to use it. I remember a poor man giving me what I thought great praise. I visited him in the hospital and he said, “Ah, you seem to have hung this room round with your texts, for everything reminds me of what I have heard you say, and as I lay here I recollect your stories and your sayings.” In much the same way, we should remember what God has done for us by looking at all the various places, circumstances, times, and persons which were the surroundings of His mercy. O for a clear remembrance of the goodness of God.

Memory is sometimes helped by classification. You send a servant to a shop for a variety of articles—she will forget some of them unless you so arrange the order that one suggests another. Take care then to set God’s mercies in order before you and reckon them up in number, if you can, and so fix them in your memory.

At other times, when persons have very bad memories, they like to write down on a piece of paper that which is important to remember. I have often done so, and have placed the paper where I have never found it again; a thread around the finger or a knot in a handkerchief and many other devices have been

tried. I do not care what it is, so long as you try and remember God's mercy to you by some means or other. Do make some record of His goodness. You know the day in which you lost that money, do you not? "Yes, very well." You remember the day of the month of Black Friday or Black Monday, up in the City. You have evil days indelibly noted in the black pocketbook of memory—do you remember as well the days of God's special loving-kindness to you? You should. Take pains to make notes of notable benefits and to mark remarkable blessings and so you shall in future days utter the memory of God's great goodness.

The first two processes for securing abundant praise are observation and remembrance. The next is utterance "They shall abundantly utter." The word contains the idea of boiling or bubbling up like a fountain. It signifies a holy fluency about the mercy of God. We have quite enough fluent people about, but they are many of them, idlers for whom Satan finds abundant work to do. May the Lord deliver us from the noise of fluent women—but it matters not how fluent men and women are if they will be fluent on the topic now before us. Open your mouths. Let the praises pour forth. Let rivers of it come. Stream away! Gush away all that you possibly can. "They shall abundantly utter the memory of Your great goodness." Do not stop the joyful speakers—let them go on forever. They do not exaggerate—they cannot. You say they are enthusiastic, but they are not half up to the pitch yet. Bid them become more excited and speak yet more fervently. Go on, brother, go on. Pile it up. Say something greater, grander, and more fiery still! You cannot exceed the truth. You have come to a theme where your most fluent powers will fail in utterance. The text calls for a sacred fluency and I would exhort you to exercise it liberally when you are speaking of the goodness of God.

"They shall abundantly utter it"—that is, they shall constantly be doing it—they shall talk about God's goodness all day long. When you step into their cottages, they will begin to tell you of God's goodness to them. When you bid adieu to them at night, you shall hear more last words upon their favorite theme. Very likely they will repeat themselves, but that does not matter, you cannot have too much of this truly good thing. Just as the singers in the temple repeated again and again the chorus, "His mercy endures forever," so may we repeat our praises. Some of God's mercies are so great and sweet that if we never had another thought throughout eternity, the recollection of the single favor might forever remain. The splendor of divine love is so great that a single manifestation of it is often all that we can bear. To have two such revelations at once would be as overpowering as though God should make two suns when one already fills the world with light. Oh, praise the Lord, my brethren and sisters, with boundless exultation. Awaken all your faculties to this divine service and abundantly utter the memory of His goodness.

You cannot praise abundantly unless your memory supplies materials and on the other hand, your memory will lose strength unless you utter what you know. When you went to school and had a lesson to learn, you found out that by reading your lesson aloud you learned it more quickly, for your ears assisted your eyes. Uttering the divine goodness is a great help to the memory of it. By teaching we learn—by giving the truth expression, we deepen its impression upon our minds.

Now I come to the last part of this admirable process. When we have abundantly uttered, then we are to *sing*. In the old Greek mythology, Mnemosyne, the goddess of memory, is the mother of the Muses and surely where there is a good memory of God's loving-kindness the heart will soon produce a song. But what is surprising in the text is that when the joy is described as mounting from plain utterance to song it takes another theme—"Sing of *Your righteousness*." When the heart is most adoring and selects the grandest theme for reverent song, it chooses the meeting of goodness and righteousness as its topic. How sweet is that canticle—"Mercy and truth are met together, and righteousness and peace have kissed each other." The atonement is the gem of the heart's poetry. Do not your hearts burn within you at the very mention of the glorious deed of Jesus, our great Substitute? Parnassus is outdone by Calvary. The Castalian spring is dried and Jesus' wounded side has opened another fountain of song. The goodness of the Lord to us in all the blessings of His providences we gladly chant, but when we tell of the grace which led our Lord Jesus to bleed and die, "the just for the unjust to bring us to God," our music leaps to nobler heights. Incomparable wisdom ordained a way in which God should be righteous to the sternness of severity and yet should be good, illimitable good, to those that put their trust in Him. Lift up then your music till the golden harps shall find themselves outdone.

Thus, we have explained the method of securing an abundant utterance—may the Holy Spirit help us carry it out.

II. In the second place, we shall very briefly note THE MOTIVES FOR THIS ABUNDANT UTTERANCE. These are very near to hand. The first is because we cannot help it. The goodness of God demands that we should speak of it. If the Lord Jesus Himself should charge His people to be silent as to His goodness, they would scarcely be able to obey the command. They would, like the man that was healed, blaze abroad the mighty work that He had done. But bless His name, He has not told us to be quiet—He allows us to abundantly utter the memory of His great goodness. The stones of the street would cry out as we went along if we did not speak of His love. Some of you good people seldom speak of the goodness of God. How is this? I wonder you can be so coldly quiet. “Oh,” said one in his first love, “I must speak or I shall burst” and we have sometimes felt the same when the restrained testimony was as fire within our bones. Is it not a sacred instinct to tell out what we feel within? The news is too good to keep. Indulge to the full the holy propensity of your renewed nature. Your soul says, “Speak,” and if etiquette says, “Hush, they will think you a fanatic,” regard it not, but speak aloud and let them think you are a fanatic if they please. Sir, play the organ very softly when the subject is your own praise, but when you come to the praises of God, pull out all the stops—thunders of music are all too little for His infinite glories.

Another motive for abundantly uttering the praises of God is that other voices are clamorous to drown it. What a noisy world this is with its conflicting and discordant cries. “Lo here,” cries one. “Lo there,” shouts another; this uproar would drown the notes of God’s praise unless His people uttered it again and again and yet again! The more there is said against our God, the more should we speak for Him. Whenever you hear a man curse, it would be wise to say aloud, “Bless the Lord.” Say it seven times for every time he curses and make him hear it. Perhaps he will want to know what you are doing and you will then have an opportunity of asking what he is doing—and he will have more difficulty in explaining himself than you will in explaining yourself. Do try, if you can, to make up for the injuries done to the dear and sacred name of God by multiplying your praises in proportion as you hear Him spoken ill of. I say, unless you give forth abundant utterance, God’s praise will be buried under heaps of error, blasphemy, ribaldry, nonsense, and idle talk. Abundantly utter it so that some of it at least may be heard.

Praise the Lord abundantly because it will benefit you to do so. How bright the past looks when we begin to praise God for it. We say, “I am the man that has seen affliction,” and we are to fill the cup of memory with gall and wormwood—but when we see the goodness of God in it all, we turn the kerchief with which we wiped our tears into a flag of victory—and with holy praise, in the name of our God, we wave the banner.

As for the present, if you think of God’s mercies, how different it seems. A man comes to his dinner table and does not enjoy what is there because he misses an expected dainty, but if he were as poor as some people, he would not turn his nose up, but would bless the goodness which has given him so much more than he deserves. Some I know, even among Christians, are growlers in general always finding fault. The best things in the world are not good enough for them. Ah, my brother, abundantly utter the memory of God’s goodness and you will find nothing to grumble about—nothing to complain about—but everything to rejoice in

. As for the future, if we remember God’s goodness, how joyfully we shall march into it. There is the same goodness for tomorrow as for yesterday, and the same goodness for old age as for youth—the same God to bless me when I grow grey as when I was a babe upon my mother’s breast—therefore, forward to the future without hesitation or suspicion, abundantly uttering the loving-kindness of the Lord.

Again, I think we ought to do this because of the good it does to other people. If you abundantly talk of God’s goodness you are sure to benefit your neighbors. Many are comforted when they hear of God’s goodness to their friends. Draw a long face and lament the trials of the way—sit down with somber brethren and enjoy a little comfortable misery and see whether crowds will ask to share your vinegar.—

*“While here our various wants we mourn,
United groans ascend on high,”*

says Dr. Watts and I am afraid he speaks the truth, but very few will be led in this way to resolve—"We will go with these people, for we perceive that God is with them." Is it good reasoning if men say, "These people are so miserable that they must be on the way to heaven"? We may hope they are, for they evidently need some better place to live in, but then it may be questioned if such folks would not be wretched even in heaven. You smile, dear friends, as if you said you would not be much attracted by sanctimonious misery, nor do I think you would. Therefore, do not try it yourselves, but on the contrary, talk much of the goodness of the Lord and wear a smiling face and let your eyes sparkle and go through the world as if after all you are not slaves under the lash or prisoners in bonds, but the Lord's free men. We have glorious reasons for being happy—let us be so and soon we shall hear persons asking, "What is this? Is this religion? I always thought religious people felt bound to be down in the dumps and to go mourning and sighing all their days." When they see your joy they will be tempted to come to Christ. There is a blessed seductiveness in a holy, happy life. Praise then His name. Praise His name forevermore. Abundantly utter the memory of His great goodness and you will bring many to Christ.

Such happy utterance will help also to comfort your own Christian friends and fellow sufferers. There is a deal of misery in the world—just now more than usual. Many are sorrowing from various causes. Therefore, my dear friends be happier than you ever were. That venerable man of God, now in heaven, our dear old father Dransfield, when it was a very foggy morning in November, used to always come into the vestry before the sermon and say, "It is a dreary morning, dear pastor. We must rejoice in the Lord more than usual; things around us are dark, but within and above all is bright. I hope we shall have a very happy service today." He would shake hands with me and smile till he seemed to carry us all into the middle of summer. What if it is bad weather? Bless the Lord that it is not worse than it is. We are not altogether in Egyptian darkness—the sun does shine now and then—and we are sure it is not blown out. So, when we are sick and ill, let us thank God that we shall not be ill forever, for there is a place where the inhabitants are no more sick. And now today, if your harps have been hanging on the willows, take them down. If you have not praised the Lord as you should, begin to do so. Wash your mouths and get rid of the sour flavor of murmuring about bad trade and bad weather. Sweeten your lips with the pleasant confection of praise. I will tell you this, brethren, if any of you shall confess to me that you have sinned by going too far in blessing God, I will for once become a priest and give you absolution. I never tried my hand at that business before, but I think I can manage as much. Praise God extravagantly if you can. Try it. I wish you would say within yourself, "I will go beyond all bounds in this matter," for there are no bounds to the deserving of an ever-blessed God.

Lastly, let us praise and bless God because it is the way in which He is glorified. We cannot add to His glory, for it is infinite in itself—but we can make it to be more widely known by simply stating the truth about Him. Don't you want to give honor to God? Would you not lay down your life that the whole earth might be filled with His glory? Well, if you cannot cover the earth with His praises as the waters cover the sea, you can at least contribute your portion to the flood. Oh, keep not back your praises, but bless and magnify His name from the rising of the sun to the going down of the same. It will lift earth upward and heavenward if we can all unite in praise—we shall see it rising as it were beneath our feet—and ourselves rising with it until we shall stand as upon the top of some loftiest Alp that has pierced the vault of heaven, and we shall be among the angels, feeling as they feel, doing as they do, and losing ourselves as they lose themselves in the eternal hallelujah of, "Glory, and honor, and majesty, and power, and dominion, and might be unto Him that sits upon the throne, and unto the Lamb forever and ever."

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